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## SHARKS IN PERIL

Shark populations around the world are being decimated by hunting and slaughter for their fins, overfishing, accidental catch and ocean pollution.

Two of six shark species at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium are listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List of Endangered Species; two are considered vulnerable; two are listed as Data Deficient, meaning scientists just don't know enough about their populations to place them on the threat scale.

### ICUN Red List of Threatened Species

Chart shows the IUCN continuum of extinction.



## ABOUT OUR SHARKS

### Sandbar shark

- **IUCN status:** Vulnerable
- **Size:** 6-8 feet long; up to 250 pounds
- **Habitat:** Found in tropical and subtropical waters of the Pacific Ocean, the western and eastern Atlantic, the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Mediterranean Sea. They favor shallow inshore waters



down to 200 feet and are rarely seen at the surface.

- **Wild Diet:** Bottom fish, shrimp, crab, crustaceans, and mollusks
- **Lifespan:** 20-50 years
- **Major threats:** Increased recreational fishing and a heightened demand for shark fins and meat in the 1980s had a profound adverse effect on the numbers of sandbar sharks in the southwestern Atlantic. However, there has been a slight rise in population numbers in recent years due to fishery regulations and a decrease of large predatory sharks.

### Sand tiger shark

- **IUCN status:** Vulnerable
- **Size:** 4-12 feet long; up to 350 pounds
- **Habitat:** Found near rocky outcroppings in shallow inshore waters across most of the world's oceans except for the eastern Pacific. They occasionally enter freshwater.
- **Wild Diet:** Small fish such as mackerel, menhaden, flounder, and sea trout; also skates, crabs, lobster and squid
- **Lifespan:** 16-50 years
- **Major threats:** Sand tiger sharks are still recovering from overfishing in Australia and South Africa. They are currently regulated on the east coast of the United States and in a few other parts of the world.

### Blacktip reef shark

- **IUCN Status:** Near Threatened
- **Size:** Up to 7 feet long; up to 30 pounds
- **Habitat:** Found in tropical and subtropical waters of the western and central Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean and Red Sea; and along the eastern African coast and in the eastern Mediterranean sea.
- **Wild Diet:** Small reef fish, eels, crustaceans, octopus, squid, crabs, and sea snakes
- **Lifespan:** Unknown
- **Major threats:** Blacktip reef sharks are regularly caught by inshore fisheries; their fins are valued for shark fin soup and their liver as source of oil.

### Lemon shark

- **IUCN Status:** Near Threatened

- **Size:** 6-10 feet long; up to 450 pounds
- **Habitat:** Found in tropical coastal waters of the western Atlantic, eastern Pacific and Indo-Pacific oceans. They are usually found in shallow water (up to 275 feet deep) around coral reefs, mangrove forests, or estuaries.
- **Wild Diet:** Mollusks, fish, crabs, shrimp, seabirds, smaller sharks and rays
- **Lifespan:** Unknown
- **Major threats:** Lemon sharks are collected by commercial and recreational fisheries along the U.S. Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean, and the eastern Pacific Ocean. Though some fisheries commonly target this species to harvest its skin and meat, it is also frequently killed as bycatch (accidental catch).

### Nurse shark

- **IUCN status:** Data deficient
- **Size:** Up to 14 feet long; up to 400 pounds
- **Habitat:** Found in the Atlantic Ocean from Rhode Island to Brazil and in the Pacific Ocean from the Gulf of California to Ecuador. They inhabit bays, estuaries, and shallow tropical reefs.
- **Wild Diet:** Small fish, crab, lobster, shrimp, octopus, squid, and sea urchins. They use their mouths like vacuums to suck prey out of crevices.
- **Lifespan:** Unknown
- **Major threats:** Nurse sharks are not widely commercially fished, but they are easy targets for local fisheries because they move so slowly. They are sometimes used as bait to catch other animals and their tough skin is prized for leather.

### Japanese Wobbegong shark (or carpet shark)

- **IUCN status:** Data deficient
- **Size:** Up to 3 feet long; 40-50 pounds
- **Habitat:** Found in shallow tropical and subtropical waters of the Pacific Ocean, along the coasts of Japan, Korea, the Philippines and Australia. They are most commonly found on coral reefs and on the sandy bottom, from the intertidal zone down to 350 feet.
- **Wild Diet:** Small fish, crabs, shrimp, and other invertebrates. Wobbegong sharks rest on the bottom and grab fish with sharp, fanglike teeth.
- **Lifespan:** Unknown
- **Major threats:** Japanese Wobbegong sharks are caught in bottom set gill nets in Japan for human consumption. They also are caught in China, Korea and Vietnam.